

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FEMALES OF  
*AMPHIPYRA PYRAMIDEA* L. AND *A. BERBERA*  
RUNGS: A CORRECTION TO M.B.G.B.I.  
VOLUME 10

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It is inevitable that, in an undertaking as ambitious as the *Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* (MBGBI) some errors will occur, but it is unfortunate that one error perpetuated in this standard work will possibly continue to misguide and frustrate generations of lepidopterists in the future.

In MBGBI (Vol. 10), descriptions of the female genitalia of *Amphipyra pyramidea* and *A. berbera* on page 149 and the drawings on p. 157 are taken from the figure given by Heath (1971). Thus both Heath and MBGBI convey the impression that the only specific difference is the shape of the genital plate (ventral sternite of eighth abdominal segment). These drawings were taken from the original descriptions given by Fletcher (1968) who does indeed give each of these shapes in his drawings. However, (as is always a risk with unlabelled drawings of genitalia) Fletcher did not intend this to be a specific difference and did not mention it in his text. Fletcher described and illustrated specific differences in the shape of the lamella postvaginalis, a small structure easily overlooked both in specimens and in Fletcher's drawings. The term lamella postvaginalis was evidently misinterpreted by others as meaning genital plate, and the fortuitous difference in Fletcher's drawings of the genital plate became a spurious specific difference in the drawings of Heath (1971) and in MBGBI Vol. 10.

I have examined the genitalia of several hundred specimens of each species and can state with confidence that both the shapes given by Heath occur within each species — not surprisingly, since no original author has ever intended or described them as a valid difference between the species. Thus entomologists who attempt to use the criterion for female genitalia given by Heath or by MBGBI will not only make incorrect identifications but will also condemn themselves to hours (in my case, a year) of frustration and doubt, since most specimens have plates with shapes which are intermediate between the two forms illustrated.

Besides the difference in the lamella postvaginalis, Fletcher also illustrates and describes a difference in the relative lengths of the setae, firmly attached hair-like structures which cover the genital plate. The setae are long in *pyramidea*, short in *berbera* — see Craik (1980) for measurements. I have found this criterion to be much the most distinct difference between the genitalia of the females. The Marine Laboratory, P.O. Box 3, Oban, Argyll. PA34 4AD.

lamella postvaginalis is a small structure requiring careful examination, but the difference in the lengths of the setae is so pronounced and so readily observed through a low-power microscope that identification based on them is rapid and easy after very little experience. However, this very distinct and valuable criterion is unfortunately not mentioned in MBGBI.

This single error in the series "Guide to the Critical Species" by Heath and others should not be taken as a criticism of the series as a whole. I have found all seven parts of this series to be extremely valuable during the years since they appeared, and it is a great pity that the series was not continued and expanded.

### References

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- Heath, J. 1971. Lepidoptera Distribution Maps Scheme. Guide to the Critical Species Part IV. *Entomologist's Gazette* **22**, 19-22.
- Heath, J. & Emmet, A. M. 1983. *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 10. Colchester, Harley Books. 459pp.

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QUEDIUS AETOLICUS KRAATZ (COL., STAPHYLINIDAE) IN SURREY. — Professor J. A. Owen appears to have provided the first published record of this species in Surrey (1976, *Proc. Br. ent. nat. Hist. Soc.*, **9**: 34-35). I first encountered this beetle on 26.ii.83 when a dead but still intact example was found behind bark on Ham Common, some six miles to the north of the area (TQ16) which Prof. Owen hints at (*loc. cit.*). This specimen was kindly identified by Mr. P. M. Hammond at the British Museum (Natural History). Later on in the year (18.xi), I was fortunate enough to take a second, live example from the same dead oak tree where it was resting behind the loose and powdery bark. It is interesting that Joy (1932, *Practical Handbook of British Beetles*, **1**: 113) regards *aetolicus* as very rare with only two counties to its credit. Since then, of course, a number of other localities have been found and no doubt its present rarity should be interpreted as less extreme. — D. A. PRANCE, 23 Brunswick Road, Kingston Hill, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey.

CORRIGENDUM. — In my paper on *Gronops inaequalis* Boheman (*Ent. Rec.*, **95**:215), one should read in lines 12/14 down, "Scales more uniform in size than in *inaequalis*." — L. CLEMONS.